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MAKE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS TO GET HEALTHIER IN 2006

(RICHMOND, Va.)—With the new year just around the corner, many Virginians will make resolutions to improve their health in 2006. Most of us know that we should work to be healthier by increasing physical activity, eating right, losing weight and quitting smoking. These habits can reduce your risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes, or improve your health if you already have a chronic illness. The hard part is knowing where to start and keeping good health habits throughout the year.

Leading a healthy life may mean changing habits you learned in childhood, but even small changes can make a big difference. Make this the year you start living a healthier lifestyle by starting with these five easy tips from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH).

1. **I will lose weight and keep it off.** According to a 2002 VDH study, nearly 59 percent of adult Virginians are overweight or obese. Being overweight or obese makes you more likely to develop health problems including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. The best way to lose extra pounds and maintain a healthy weight is by eating a healthy, balanced diet and getting regular exercise. A healthy rate of weight loss is one-half to two pounds per week. Set yourself up for success with realistic goals, and keep motivated by identifying milestones to meet along the way.
2. **I will make healthy food choices.** An unhealthy diet not only contributes to weight gain, but you may not be getting the vitamins and minerals necessary to stay healthy. With so many inexpensive high-fat and high-calorie foods available, choosing the right things to eat can be a challenge. Eating right doesn't mean following the latest fad diet. Balance the occasional unhealthy treat with sensible meals and portions. Make food appetizing with herbs and spices that add flavor without adding fat. Visit www.mypyramid.gov to learn more about choosing the foods and amounts that are right for you.

Only 26 percent of Virginians eat five servings of fruit and vegetables each day as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Try some of these easy ways to add more fruit and vegetables to your diet:

- Add fruit to your breakfast cereal or oatmeal. Try bananas, apples, grapes, berries, peaches or mandarin oranges.
- Select pre-cut vegetables such as carrots or celery, or dried fruit as a snack at work instead of candy or chips.
- Supplement your take-out meal with fruits and vegetables from home.
- Broil sliced vegetables such as zucchini, bell peppers, eggplant and tomatoes for a few minutes until they blacken around the edges. Serve warm with a light dressing of lemon juice, reduced-fat mayonnaise and black pepper.
- Add one to two cups of frozen vegetables to canned soup before heating.
- Add grapes, sliced apples and pears to chicken salad.
- Top broiled meat, chicken or fish with salsa. Each ½ cup of salsa equals one serving.

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3. **I will get enough exercise.** Fifty-one percent of Virginians don't get the 30 minutes of exercise on most days that the CDC recommends. Physical activity aids weight loss, improves heart health and helps reduce stress. Regular exercise can actually increase your energy level, and every little bit helps. If you want to start exercising or increase your weekly physical activity, here are some suggestions to get started:
 - Think about your weekly schedule and find or make opportunities to be active.
 - Take fitness breaks instead of coffee or cigarette breaks at work. Walk to lunch or to run errands and take the stairs instead of the elevator.
 - Keep motivated by making a pledge with a friend or family member to exercise together.
 - If the gym isn't for you, try team sports, dancing or walking.
 - Get the whole family involved. Exercise with your children or pets. Go for a walk, dance or play an active game like tag or ball.
 - Exercise while watching your favorite TV show. Use hand weights, home gym equipment or stretch.
 - Think of activities you can do regardless of the weather outside. Stair climbing, aerobics, indoor swimming and mall walking are good exercise year-round.
4. **I will quit smoking.** We all know that using tobacco products can lead to cancer, emphysema and other health problems. Second-hand smoke can also have harmful effects on your children and other non-smokers around you. But as anyone who has tried can tell you, kicking the habit can be tough. Quit Now Virginia, VDH's tobacco cessation program, provides information and a self-help Quit Kit to all Virginians and provides comprehensive treatment services to Medicaid recipients and the uninsured. Call the Quitline at (800) QUIT-NOW for more information.
5. **I will get regular checkups and health screenings.** One of the best ways to avoid living with complications of chronic disease is to catch the disease early, or even before it starts. Preventive screenings can detect risk factors for cancer, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic health problems when you still have time to make a positive change. Identifying a disease in its early stages can mean the difference between managing mild symptoms and living with a debilitating condition and a diminished quality of life. Make an appointment with your health provider to discuss necessary screenings for you and your family.

The Virginia Board of Health has made preventing and combating chronic disease its top priority. By resolving to make positive lifestyle choices, Virginians can help realize that goal. To learn more about VDH's programs to prevent chronic disease and improve the health of all Virginians, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov.

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